

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0897
LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG EAID LA UNHCR SREF
SUBJECT: UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE DISCUSSES UNHCR PROGRAM

IN THE LPDR

REF: A VIENTIANE 0190, B VIENTIANE 0281

SUMMARY: ANGELO RASANAYAGAM, UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE, DESCRIBED TO EMBOFF UNHCR ACTIVITIES IN THE LPDR. HE PROVIDED THE NUMBERS AND CATEGORIES OF LAO NATIONALS RELOCATED WITHIN LAOS. HE EXPLAINED THAT UNHCR AID WAS BROKEN DOWN INTO THE FOLLOWING AREAS: "RETURN TO VILLAGE", FOOD, TRANSPORT, AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH SYSTEMS AND CONSTRUCTION. HE SPOKE OF PROBLEMS FACED BY THE UNHCR IN ADMINISTRATION OF ITS PROGRAM IN THE LPDR AND LISTED LPDR AID PRIORITIES AS ENUMERATED BY LAO OFFICIALS. COMMENTS OF DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS AS WELL AS EMBOFFS OBSERVATIONS CONCLUDE THIS BRIEF WRAP-UP OF UNHCR ACTIVITIES IN THE LPDR. END SUMMARY.

1. IN TWO DISCUSSIONS IN LATE MAY UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE ANGELO RASANAYAGAM PROVIDED EMBOFF WITH THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FOLLOWING INFORMATION REGARDING UNHCR ASSISTANCE IN THE LPDR: HE SAID THAT IN 1974-75 THE UNHCR ASSISTED IN THE MOVEMENT OF 117,000 PEOPLE IN LAOS, AND THAT IN 1976 THE FIGURE WAS 158,000. HE SAID THAT IN 1977 THE UNHCR EXPECTS TO ASSIST IN THE RELOCATION OF 150,000 PERSONS. RASANAYAGAM SAID THAT THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THESE RELOCATIONS WERE NOT REFUGEES BUT "DISPLACED

PERSONS."

2. RASANAYAGAM EXPLAINED THAT IN THE PAST THE UNHCR ASSISTED IN THE RELOCATION OF DISPLACED PERSONS BETWEEN ROYAL AND PATHET LAO ZONES, BUT HAS NEVER BEEN MORE THAN "MINIMALLY INVOLVED" IN RELOCATION OF REFUGEES (E.G., RETURNEES FROM THAILAND). HE DEFINED "DISPLACED PERSONS" AS LAO WHO HAD FLED CONFLICT IN THEIR NATIVE REGIONS.

3. HE SAID THAT IN PRINCIPLE DISPLACED PERSONS IN LAOS ARE ALWAYS RETURNED TO THEIR POINT OF ORIGIN AND ARE ALWAYS INTERVIEWED PRIOR TO THEIR RELOCATION TO DETERMINE THEIR WILLINGNESS TO RETURN. EMBOFF WAS TOLD BY A PREVIOUS UNHCR OFFICER (REF A), HOWEVER, THAT UNHCR SUPPORT WAS GIVEN TO LPDR EFFORTS TO RELOCATE HMONG FORCED TO RESETTLE IN THE VANG VIENG AREA AS A RESULT OF LPLA CAMPAIGNS IN THEIR TRADITIONAL HOMELANDS IN MUONG KASSY AND LONG TIENG-BAN CHENG.

4. RASANAYAGAM ELABORATED THE FOLLOWING REGARDING PRINCIPAL AREAS OF UNHCR SUPPORT"

A) RETURN TO VILLAGE: PRIMARY UNHCR SUPPORT FOR "RETURN TO VILLAGE" IS IN THE FORM OF PROVISION OF "RE-SETTLEMENTS KITS:" TO APPROXIMATELY ONE THIRD OF RETURNING FAMILIES. THE KITS ARE OF THREE TYPES: AN AGRICULTURAL TOOL KIT (COST: APPROXIMATELY \$10.00). DOMESTIC EQUIPMENT (COST: APPROXIMATELY \$13.00), AND MEDICAL EQUIPMENT (COST: APPROXIMATELY \$4.00). UNHCR CONFIDENTIAL

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USUALLY SUPPLIES EACH FAMILY (ESTIMATED BY UNHCR TO CONSIST OF FIVE PERSONS) WITH ALL THREE TYPES OF KITS AT A COST RANGING FROM \$25.00 TO \$30.00. IN 1976, THE UNHCR PROVIDED APPROXIMATELY 10,000 SUCH KITS AND WAS ABLE TO SECURE NON-UNHCR FUNDING (VOLAG FUNDING) FOR 14,000 ADDITIONAL KITS. IN 1977 THE UNHCR HAS FUNDS TO PROVIDE APPROXIMATELY 10,000 KITS. UNHCR PURCHASES THE KITS FROM THAILAND. THE LPDR DISTRIBUTES THE KITS.

B) FOOD: UNHCR UNDERTAKES TO PROVIDE FOOD FOR ONE THIRD OF THE DISPLACED PERSONS, ASSUMING THAT THE REST WILL BE PLACED INTO AREAS WHERE FOOD WILL EITHER BE PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT OR WHERE IT CAN BE PURCHASED BY THE RESETTLED PEOPLE. WHEN FOOD IS PROVIDED BY THE UNHCR IT IS USUALLY PROVIDED FOR A THREE TO FIVE MONTH PERIOD AT A RATION OF FIVE KILOS PER MONTH PER CAPITA. IN 1976 THE UNHCR SUPPLIED 4,500 TONS OF RICE AND 150 TONS OF CANNED FISH AND MEAT. IN 1977, UNHCR PLANS TO SUPPLY 2,000 TONS OF RICE, WHICH IT ESTIMATES WILL FEED 5,000 FAMILIES FOR APPROXIMATELY

THREE TO FIVE MONTHS. PROVISION OF FOOD BY THE UNHCR IS CONSIDERED A PRIORITY IN THE GENERAL UNHCR EFFORT IN THE LPDR BY BOTH THE UNHCR AND THE GOVERNMENT. AT THE MOMENT, THE UNHCR IS SEEKING FUNDS TO ENABLE IT TO SUPPLY MORE FOOD THAN THE 2,000 TONS PLANNED FOR 1977.

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C) TRANSPORT: TRANSPORT AID CONSISTS OF UNHCR PROVISION TO THE LPDR OF TRUCKS AND FUEL. TRUCKS ARE USUALLY PROVIDED IN KIND, MONEY FOR FUEL IS PROVIDED TO SHELL OIL WHICH IN TURN DELIVERS FUEL TO THE LPDR. UNHCR PROVIDES FUNDS TO THE LPDR TO DEFRAY AIR TRANSPORTATION OF SOME DISPLACED PERSONS. COSTS ARE PAID ON THE BASIS OF LAO AVIATION BILLS PRESENTED TO THE UNHCR BY THE GOVERNMENT.

D) AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: IN FUNDING FOR 1976 PROJECTS IN AGRICULTURE THE UNHCR WAS ONLY ABLE TO SECURE \$1.250 MILLION OF AN ANTICIPATED \$2 MILLION. CONSEQUENTLY, THE UNHCR REQUESTED AND RECEIVED FROM THE LAO GOVERNMENT ITS PRIORITIES FOR AID IN THIS CATEGORY. THE UNHCR HAS RESPONDED TO GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES BY PURCHASING DUMP TRUCKS, IRRIGATION PUMPS AND, THUS FAR, FIFTEEN OF SIXTY SMALL TRACTORS. IN 1977 THE UNHCR INTENDS TO PROVIDE \$805,000 WORTH OF FERTILIZER AND SEEDS. IN EARLY APRIL, THE LPDR MADE A SPECIAL REQUEST TO THE UNHCR FOR ADDITIONAL FERTILIZER AND INSECTICIDE.

E) HEALTH SYSTEMS: THE LPDR INTENDS TO BUILD DISPENSARIES IN EACH OF 840 DISTRICTS IN LAOS. THE

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UNHCR HAS UNDERTAKEN TO FUND THE CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPMENT OF SIXTY SUCH DISTRICT DISPENSARIES AND TO EQUIP AN ADDITIONAL FORTY OF THE GOVERNMENT-BUILT FACILITIES. ALL UNHCR-ASSISTED DISPENSARIES WILL BE IN AREAS OF HEAVY DISPLACED PERSON RESETTLEMENT. THE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT IS TO BE PROVIDED FROM A SWISS CONTRIBUTION OF MADE-IN-SWITZERLAND EQUIPMENT. THE DISPENSARIES ARE TO BE STAFFED BY LAO TECHNICIANS WHO WILL RECEIVE THREE MONTHS OF TRAINING AND WHO WILL BE RETRAINED AT SIX MONTH INTERVALS. THIRTY OF THE SIXTY DISPENSARIES TO BE BUILT WITH UNHCR SUPPORT HAVE BEEN COMPLETED BUT HAVE NOT YET BEEN EQUIPPED, THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAS REQUESTED EQUIPMENT FOR TWENTY DISPENSARIES. UNHCR OFFICIALS INTEND TO SPOT-CHECK A FEW COMPLETED DISPENSARIES TO DETERMINE IF THEY ARE READY TO BE EQUIPPED. THUS FAR, THE UNHCR CLAIMS TO BE SATISFIED WITH ITS VISITS TO TWO DISPENSARIES IN THE PLAIN OF JARS AND TWO IN VIENTIANE PROVINCE.

F) CONSTRUCTION: FUNDING BY UNHCR FOR "CONSTRUCTION"

IN 1976 WAS \$5.3 MILLION, SHORT OF THE TARGETED \$6 MILLION. FOR 1977, THE UNHCR HOPES TO RAISE \$2.8 MILLION. FUNDS ARE TO BE USED TO PURCHASE ROOFING SHEETS, CEMENT, AND ELECTRICAL HARDWARE.

5. RASANAYAGAM SAID THAT THE LPDR HAS STATED ITS PRIORITIES FOR 1977 AS BEING RESETTLEMENT KITS, FOOD, FERTILIZER, SEEDS AND INSECTICIDE.

6. SEVERAL UN OFFICIALS IN THE LPDR HAVE ALLEGED THAT UNHCR ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES ARE HAPHAZARD AT BEST WITH UNHCR'S THREE OFFICER STAFF BEING SIMPLY TOO THIN TO MONITOR A PROGRAM IN SO LARGE AN AREA WHERE COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS AND SECURITY CONCERNS MAKE REGULAR INSPECTIONS OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE.

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7. RASANAYAGAM SAID THAT UNHCR REGULARLY USES BILLS PRESENTED TO THE UNHCR BY THE LPDR AS A RECEIPT SYSTEM, NOTABLY IN THE TRANSPORT AREA. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE UNHCR ASSISTANCE TO THE LPDR WAS MADE IN KIND AND NOT IN CASH TURNSOVERS SO AS TO PREVENT "IRREGULARITIES". HE SAID THAT THE PRIMARY

ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEM FACED BY THE UNHCR WAS POOR COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN VIENTIANE AND PROVINCIAL PROJECT SITES. HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT CONSIDER HIS STAFF TOO SMALL FOR THE TASK OF MONITORING THE UNHCR LPDR PROGRAM.

8. COMMENT: RASANAYAGAM DID NOT ADMIT TO ANY SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITHIN THE UNHCR PROGRAM OR IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE LPDR. THE UNHCR DOES APPEAR TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE LPDR, UNLIKE UNFDAC AND SOME OTHER DONOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS. SOME OBSERVERS CONTEND, AND THERE APPEARS TO BE SOME CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE INDICATING THAT UNHCR-LPDR GOOD RELATIONS MIGHT BE IN PART A PRODUCT OF THE UNHCR'S "COOPERATIVE" ATTITUDE AND UNQUESTIONING APPROACH TO AID GIVING.
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